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Saskatchewan

Moose Jaw elder care home facing COVID-19 outbreak warns of 'significant staffing challenges'

Outbreak declared at Providence Place long-term care home last Friday

Guy Quenneville - CBC News

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Providence Place, a privately-run 160-bed long-term care centre, declared a COVID-19 outbreak at the facility last Friday, (Google Street View)

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A seniors' care centre in Moose Jaw dealing with a COVID-19 outbreak is warning residents' families of "significant staffing challenges over the coming weeks."

A COVID-19 outbreak was declared last Friday at Providence Place, a privately-run 160-bed long-term care centre, the home's administrative co-ordinator Jennifer Morson told CBC News on Tuesday.

The outbreak was added to the province's ongoing list of outbreak centres late Tuesday morning.

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Morson has sent a series of emails to residents' families to update them on the situation. In the latest update, dated Monday, Morson said all residents were tested for the virus last week and that any employee who was in close contact with a confirmed case has been ordered to self-isolate for 14 days.

"As a result, we have significant staffing challenges over the coming weeks," Morson wrote.

It's not clear how many residents and staff have tested positive or how many workers have had to step away from their duties. CBC News has requested those details from the home.

"We have a plan to ensure your loved ones receive safe care and the plan focuses on ensuring your loved ones are fed, have their bathroom needs met, medications administered and are repositioned to ensure no skin breakdown," Morson told families.

Residents are being asked to stay in their rooms, while nursing staff are wearing gowns, face shields and masks, Morson added.

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Morson also warned families of potential changes for residents as staff deal with the outbreak.

"There may be days when residents are not able to get up into their chairs and when staff have to dress them in hospital gowns as opposed to their own clothing," she wrote. "While feeding residents is a priority, we may not be able to feed each resident while breakfast and supper are still hot, therefore, cold items in some cases are being served instead to ensure the quality of the food."

One-on-one visits from social workers, spiritual care and recreation are being prioritized for residents, Morson wrote.

Providence Place is a member of the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan. According to the home's website, the facility focuses on elder care and has 14 geriatric assessment rehabilitation beds in addition to its 160 long-term care beds.

Not the first COVID home to report staffing challenges

Providence Place is not the only Saskatchewan long-term care home afflicted with a COVID-19 outbreak and warning of staffing challenges.

Luther Special Care Home in Saskatoon is the site of the largest known outbreak at a Saskatchewan care home, with 34 residents testing positive as of Monday night.

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That facility's operations lead, Ivan Olfert, said in a statement last week that "staffing at the care home has become strained, however, we are working with our partners within the health system."

Morson's Monday email update also indicated Providence Place is working with public health officials.

A spokesperson for the Saskatchewan Health Authority said Tuesday it's working with the leadership of Providence Place to identify any concerns regarding staffing.

"The safety of residents and staff is a priority, and we are working with them to ensure residents have safe care," the spokesperson said.

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Initial exposure reported in early October

The recent outbreak isn't Providence Place's first brush with COVID-19.

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In an Oct. 2 email, Morson told families that the home "had a recent positive exposure to COVID-19," though the risk of exposure to others was "extremely low."

The facility's cafeteria was shut down at the time.

"All employees continue to screen each and every shift," Morson wrote.

On Nov. 17, Morson reported more "positive exposures to COVID-19" that were the result of community transmission and said the facility was the site of a suspected outbreak.

On that same day, the province's Ministry of Health announced it was halting all visits to long-term care homes except for those visiting patients in palliative care.

"We certainly understand and can appreciate the challenges and difficulties of this situation," Morson wrote that day. "Rest assured we are acting extremely diligent and taking all necessary precautions for the safety of our resident's employee and community."

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Moose Jaw is located in the health authority's "South Central 2" zone — which also includes 14 other communities.

As of Monday, the zone had 98 known active cases of COVID-19, including 14 new cases reported that day.

(CBC News Graphics)

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